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## NOTES AND DOCUMENTS

### THE FORT DEARBORN MASSACRE

Notwithstanding the many accounts that have been written concerning the Fort Dearborn massacre of August 15, 1812, there is still ample reason for welcoming any new contemporary evidence on the subject that may present itself. The documents which follow have come to light within the last few months. For the first, acknowledgment is due Mr. Arthur G. Doughty of the department of archives, Ottawa. The group of Irwin letters are furnished by Professor Solon J. Buck, now of the Minnesota Historical Society; the originals are among the records of the Indian office at Washington. The remaining documents were found recently by the writer in the pension department. It should be added, perhaps, that still another Fort Dearborn narrative, longer and more interesting than the group which follows, was unearthed at the same time; considerations of space are responsible for its omission from the present collection.

The account of the massacre contained in the first document below, the extract from Charles Askin's diary, was obviously received from Captain Heald on September 22, 1812, the day of his arrival at Detroit on his long flight from Indian captivity. Its importance in the literature of the Fort Dearborn massacre consists in the fact that it is the earliest of the narratives emanating from Captain Heald, the unfortunate commander, which has yet come to light. As such it may be profitably compared with the later Heald family narratives,<sup>1</sup> particularly with the two given out in later years by Darius, the son of Major Heald.

Of the Irwin letters that of October 12 is most significant. It affords the first evidence concerning the killing of John La Lime, the Fort Dearborn interpreter, by John Kinzie which does not emanate from the family of the slayer himself. How widely this evidence differs from the Kinzie family account will be apparent

<sup>1</sup> For these see M. M. Quaife, *Chicago and the Old Northwest* (Chicago, 1913), ap. iii, iv, v; *Magazine of American History*, 28:111-122 (August, 1892).

by comparison with the most recent statement emanating from the Kinzie family.<sup>2</sup> Irwin's reason for leaving Chicago, to procure a person to take the place of the slain interpreter, suggests a significant query concerning the bearing of La Lime's taking off upon the relations of the garrison with the Indians during the following months. Various other sources of information, aside from the present correspondence, tend to indicate that Captain Heald's dealings with the savages were not entirely happy. May it not be that his difficulties were heightened by the loss of the veteran interpreter, and that this was one of the factors — perhaps an important one — responsible for the tragedy of August 15?

Of greatest interest, however, is the contribution, in the latter portion of the letter, to our knowledge of the trader, Kinzie, the reputed "father" of Chicago. To those who subscribe to the traditional estimate local to Chicago which pictures Kinzie as a kind of demigod, Irwin's charge that in addition to being a murderer and a traitor he contrived the massacre of the garrison and settlers in order to destroy the witnesses of his crime will come as a distinct shock. There has long been in print testimony from British sources which tends to show that Kinzie played his country false during the war; that the British also regarded him with suspicion is shown by the fact that they imprisoned him for a time. On the other hand he seems to have retained the confidence and friendship of Lewis Cass, both during and after the war.<sup>3</sup> Irwin's letter contains the only direct, contemporary charge of American origin which the present editor knows of, that Kinzie was engaged in traitorous enterprises during the War of 1812.

<sup>2</sup> Nellie Kinzie Gordon, ed., *The Fort Dearborn Massacre, Written in 1814 by Lieutenant Linai T. Helm, One of the Survivors; with Letters and Narratives of Contemporary Interest* (Chicago [1912]).

<sup>3</sup> For the British evidence as to Kinzie's double dealing see the record of a court of inquiry held at Fort Drummond in 1815, in *Michigan Pioneer and Historical Collections*, 36:327-334. On Kinzie's imprisonment see Mrs. John H. Kinzie, *Wau-Bun, the "Early Day" in the Northwest* (Chicago, 1901), 193-197. Wholly to Kinzie's credit is the account which Cass gives of the reasons for his imprisonment. "He was taken by the Indians during the war and brought here [to Detroit], where every art was used to draw him into the service of the British. These failing, he was sent in irons to Quebec, where he suffered a long and rigorous captivity." Cass to A. J. Dallas, July 10, 1815, manuscript in Indian office, Book 204, Letter Book 1:88.

An additional sidelight on the perplexities of Captain Heald's position, and incidentally of the historian who undertakes to narrate the events of this time, is afforded by Irwin's complaint that the commander was subject to too great an extent to the domination of Kinzie. It is plain from the Kinzie family narrative in *Wau Bun* that Heald aroused the wrath of Kinzie because he yielded too little to the trader's dictation.

The last two documents may both be regarded as the statements of Lieutenant Helm, second in command of the Fort Dearborn garrison at the time of the massacre.<sup>4</sup> As such they should be compared with Helm's original and extended account of the massacre. Pe-a-nish, the "Potawatomie chief," was none other than Pierre Le Claire, the half-breed, who served as the spokesman of Black Bird, the Indian leader, in initiating with Captain Heald the negotiations for the surrender of his troops at the close of the bloody conflict. In his original massacre narrative Helm describes Le Claire as having "lived a long time within a few yards of the fort and bound to Mr. Kinzie."<sup>5</sup> In view of all the facts in the premises it seems obvious that the share of Pe-a-nish in producing the document attributed to him was confined to making his mark at the end of it.

MILo M. QUAIFE

STATE HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF WISCONSIN  
MADISON

EXTRACT FROM A DIARY KEPT BY CHARLES ASKIN  
[Dominion Archives]

Sept. 22, 1812. In consequence of orders from Governor Hull to Capt. Heel<sup>6</sup> commanding officer at Chicago everything was given to the Indians that was in the Garrison even provissions — and all the Garrison with the Women and children left that place to march through the Woods to Detroit in the morn<sup>g</sup> of their departure he had information<sup>7</sup> that the Indians meant to attack but having no provission left they were obliged to persevere in their determination of going to Detroit, after leaving the Garrison and going about one mile Capt. Wells<sup>8</sup> rode forward a little

<sup>4</sup> Printed in Quaife, *Chicago and the Old Northwest*, ap. vi.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>6</sup> Captain Nathan Heald. Hull's order for the evacuation is printed in *ibid.*, 216.

<sup>7</sup> Doubtless the warning given by Black Partridge. See *ibid.*, 220, 221.

<sup>8</sup> Captain William Wells, famous scout and borderer. For a sketch of his career see *ibid.*, 224, 225.

and found the Indians about 500 in number hid behind some sand banks and other places, he immediately returned to Capt. Heel and advised him to charge the Indians with his company, which was Done in a Gallant manner as they had to ascend a small sand bank the Indians took advantage of it and fired on them they killed half<sup>9</sup> of his men, his men then fired and killed 6 Indians he then advanced and drove the Indians after which he gain'd a small height and formed his men on it, here he had a comman<sup>g</sup> situation, he had then but 29 men left, 19 of these wounded a half Indian<sup>10</sup> was sent to him to say that if they would give up they would be taken treated as prisoners, situated as he was obliged to capitulate — his Wife was with the baggage where all the Women and children were killed,<sup>11</sup> 12 Children in one Waggon were butchered, Mrs. Heel after receiving 5 Wounds was saved by Mr Jn<sup>o</sup> Burnet<sup>12</sup> it was not till night that she knew what was the fate of her husband and he knew not till then what was hers, fortunately Mr. Burnet bought them both from the Indians & sent them to St. Joseph's from whence they were taken by some Indian Traders to Mackina — they arrived at Sandwich this Even<sup>g</sup> Tuesday 22<sup>d</sup> Sept. '12 — Capt<sup>n</sup> Heel had two or three wounds also in the action Cap<sup>t</sup> Wells was murdered, his body cut open and his heart taken out & eat with apparent avidity by the Indians in presence of their prisoners and his friends — Mrs. Helmes the step daughter of Mr. Kenzie an Indian Trader & the Wife of an American Officer was saved by an Indian who kept her up to her head in Water during the action and stood between her & the balls which were flying very thick.<sup>13</sup> M<sup>r</sup> Helmes was taken, but what has been his fate or that of the others taken is not known — Chicago taken 18<sup>th</sup> Aug<sup>t</sup> a Mr. Ronan<sup>14</sup> an officer & Doct<sup>r</sup> Van Norris<sup>15</sup> were killed — 7 men were killed after they had surrendered — 37 of the men killed the first shot — one Indian arrived Thursday 24<sup>th</sup> Sept<sup>r</sup> in 4 days from Fort Wayne says the Indians had taken that place alone,<sup>16</sup> there were 1000 of them, 400

<sup>9</sup> The statistics throughout the narrative are to be taken with due caution.

<sup>10</sup> Pierre Le Claire, or Pe-a-nish, author of the document given *post*.

<sup>11</sup> But two women out of the nine who went through the massacre were killed; of eighteen children twelve perished.

<sup>12</sup> The benefactor of Mrs. Heald was Jean Baptiste Chandonnai. No other mention has come to light of the presence of a John Burnett at Fort Dearborn at this time. One of the soldiers slain in the battle was named George Burnett.

<sup>13</sup> This was the rescue of Mrs. Helm by Black Partridge, which has been made the dominant theme of the massacre monument. The present narrative invalidates the inferences suggested by the writer in his treatment of the subject two years ago. See *Chicago and the Old Northwest*, 386-388.

<sup>14</sup> George Ronan, ensign.

<sup>15</sup> Isaac Van Voorhis, surgeon.

<sup>16</sup> This report was incorrect, of course, for Fort Wayne was saved by General

Americans had come to reinforce the Garrison, finding they were prevented from coming to it the Garrison marched out to join them, the 400 were attacked. They retreated and were pursued & an other party of Indians got between the Fort and those who marched out of it beat them off. Cap<sup>t</sup> Ray<sup>17</sup> was Commandant

IRWIN TO MASON, August 6, 1812

[Department of the Interior, Indian Office]

DETROIT Aug<sup>t</sup> 6<sup>th</sup> 1812.<sup>18</sup>

SIR,

I have on former occasions informed you I should leave Chicago for this place I therefore left it on the 5<sup>th</sup> July and arrived at Mackinac on the 16<sup>th</sup> being the day previous to its capitulation to the British,<sup>19</sup> and reached this the 2<sup>d</sup> inst.

The packs from the Chicago Trading House (99 in number) have fallen, with several public letters, directed to me, into the hands of the British.

The quarterly statement ending 30<sup>th</sup> June, the Invoice of the packs and other papers, shall be forwarded the first safe opportunity. The last mail from this, fell into the hands of the Indians. There will be no safety in leaving this place till they suffer a severe defeat. Gen<sup>l</sup> Hull informs me he has left it discretionary with the Com<sup>g</sup> Officer at Chicago, as to the propriety of evacuating that post.

The Indian Traders and a large body of Indians volunteered, whilst I was at Mackinac, to take Chicago, but they were assured it could not be done, without orders from head quarters.<sup>20</sup> This day I have written to the Sec<sup>y</sup> of War.

I have the honor to be, with great respect, Sir, Y<sup>r</sup> Most Ob<sup>t</sup> Serv<sup>t</sup>

M. IRWIN

U. S. Factor.

GENL JOHN MASON,

Sup<sup>t</sup> In. Trade, Georgetown, Dis<sup>t</sup> Col<sup>a</sup>

Harrison's army. The diary of a soldier who participated in the campaign for the relief of Fort Wayne was printed in the MISSISSIPPI VALLEY HISTORICAL REVIEW, 1:272-278 (September, 1914).

<sup>17</sup> Captain James Rhea.

<sup>18</sup> The author of this letter and the three following ones was the government factor in charge of the Indian trading house at Chicago from 1809 to 1812. For a sketch of his career see Quaife, *Chicago and the Old Northwest*, 298, 299.

<sup>19</sup> For an account of this event see L. P. Kellogg, "The Capture of Mackinac in 1812," in Wisconsin Historical Society, *Proceedings*, 1912, pp. 124-145.

<sup>20</sup> The fear of these same Indians constituted one of the chief factors which induced Hull to surrender Detroit. Colonel Proctor, in reporting to General Brock the news of the destruction of the Fort Dearborn garrison, disclaimed any knowledge of an intention on the part of the Indians to attack Chicago. *Michigan Pioneer and Historical Collections*, 15:144, 145.

[*Endorsed:*] 1812 Math<sup>w</sup> Irwin Detroit 6<sup>th</sup> aug Recv<sup>d</sup> Ans advice of the British having taken 99 packs of fur belonging to Chicago factory

[*Addressed:*] Buffaloe 31 Aug Gen<sup>l</sup> John Mason, Sup<sup>t</sup> Indian Trade, Georgetown, Dis<sup>t</sup> Columbia Free

IRWIN TO MASON, August 30, 1812

[Department of the Interior, Indian Office]

BUFFALOE, STATE OF N. YORK

30 Aug<sup>t</sup> 1812.

SIR,

After the Capitulation of Detroit circumstances of a Warrantable nature induced me to leave it for this place. Here I contemplate remaining a few days in expectation of learning the fate of Chicago.

I have the honor to be With great respect, Sir, Y<sup>r</sup> Most Ob<sup>t</sup> Serv<sup>t</sup>

M. IRWIN

U. S. Factor

GEN<sup>L</sup> JOHN MASON,

Sup<sup>t</sup> In. Trade, Georgetown, Dis<sup>t</sup> Col<sup>a</sup>

[*Endorsed:*] 1812 M. Irwin Buffalo 30 aug Recv<sup>d</sup> answ<sup>d</sup>

[*Addressed:*] Gen<sup>l</sup> John Mason, Sup<sup>t</sup> In. Trade, Georgetown, Dis. Col<sup>a</sup> Free

IRWIN TO MASON, October 12, 1812

[Department of the Interior, Indian Office]

GEORGE TOWN, DIS<sup>T</sup> COL<sup>A</sup>

Octo. 12<sup>th</sup> 1812

SIR,

It being very certain that Fort Dearborn, at which I was stationed, has fallen into the hands of the Indians, I felt it my duty, in consequence, to leave Buffaloe, where I remained a few days to learn, if possible, the particulars attending that disastrous and u[n]fortunate affair, without accomplishing it in a satisfactory manner. It would appear, however, that after the fall of Michilimackinac, Gen<sup>l</sup> Hull conceived Fort Dearborn would be critically circumstanced, and in consequence, forwarded two express<sup>es</sup><sup>21</sup> to the Commanding Officer, authorising him to evacuate the post; one of which took a direct course from Detroit — the other went by the way of Fort Wayne, and carried a letter from the General to Capt<sup>t</sup> Rhea, com<sup>g</sup> officer at the latter post, authorising him to employ a number

<sup>21</sup>The order for the evacuation of Fort Dearborn was delivered to Captain Heald on August 9 by the Indian runner, Winnemac. There is no evidence that the runner sent to Fort Wayne went on to Fort Dearborn. That such a message was sent to Captain Rhea is stated by Heald in his official report of the massacre (printed in Quaife, *Chicago and the Old Northwest*, 406-408). The prompt action of Wells in going to the relief of Heald rendered the further journey of Hull's messenger unnecessary.

of friendly Miamies and a person of influence to head them, for the purpose of escorting the soldiery and others from Fort Dearborn to Fort Wayne; William Wells was selected, and, it is said, took with him about 40 Indians,<sup>22</sup> who, with himself, reached their destination and found, on their arrival, that a number of unfriendly Indians had invested or were near the place. As the Com<sup>g</sup> Officer had been instructed to evacuate the post, it is said he sent William Wells to the investing Indians, informing them that if they would not molest those under his Command while on their way to Fort Wayne, he would agree to surrender the public property under his charge, to them: this was acceded to, and the day fixed for surrender of the property and departure of the Soldiery and others. It is said by different persons that the Indians imagined some of the arms and ammunition had been secreted or destroyed, and in consequence looked upon the agreement or capitulation as void, and without hesitation fell upon the soldiery and others and destroyed all or the greater part of them,<sup>23</sup> who, perhaps, from the terms of the agreement, were unarmed. This I think highly presumptive, because, judging from the way and cautious line of conduct the Indians pursue in their warfare, I cannot conceive they would have fallen upon (including Soldiery, settlers and miamies) a body of upwards of One hundred well armed men, in an open country.<sup>24</sup> This fort was remarkably well calculated to hold out against Indians — lying in the bend of a deep river and nearly surrounded by it; built of very substantial materials, with two rows of high pickets and two Block houses which guarded every point including the communication between the Lake and Chicago River, the latter of which communicates \* with the Illinois and is the route the Traders and Indians take on their way to Mackinac. It contained a sufficiency of men to protect it and was situated on an eminence, overlooking in every direction, a level Country.<sup>25</sup>

<sup>22</sup> Heald states in his report that Wells brought "about 30 Miamis" to his relief.

<sup>23</sup> It has frequently been stated that the destruction of the liquor and the arms and ammunition was immediately responsible for the attack upon the garrison (e. g., by Mrs. Kinzie in *Wau Bun*, and by Black Hawk in his autobiography). Heald, however, asserted under oath several years later his belief that but for the destruction of these articles not a soul among the whites would have escaped the tomahawk. Affidavit of December 2, 1817, in Draper MSS., 1T6.

<sup>24</sup> Irwin's presumption is without foundation. Only the surplus arms were destroyed, and the garrison was overwhelmed in open battle. The Miami fled at the beginning of the conflict, so that the number of Heald's force actually in the combat was sixty-seven men.

\* In the spring; after which a portage of 16 miles has to be traversed which was done with Waggon and oxen.

<sup>25</sup> The "eminence" was very slight; its actual height is much exaggerated in some of the popular views of the first Fort Dearborn. Irwin does not exaggerate the

The destruction of John Lalime,<sup>26</sup> Indian Interpreter for the U. S. Trading house at Chicago, by John Kinzie, made it necessary for me to leave that place for Mackinac or Detroit, for the purpose of procuring a person to occupy the place of the deceased. My departure was on the 5<sup>th</sup> July last and my arrival at Mackinac on the 16<sup>th</sup> and on the following day that place was taken by the British and Indians. This circumstance not only prevented the object of my journey as it related to Mackinac, but prevented me from returning to Chicago from Mackinac; consequently, I in conjunction with the prisoners taken at that place, was compelled to leave it for Detroit, where I arrived in the Schooner *Mary*,<sup>27</sup> on the 2<sup>d</sup> Aug<sup>t</sup> and on the following day learnt from Gen<sup>l</sup> Hull that he had given orders to have Fort Dearborn evacuated. This consequently prevented my return to that place. Previous to my departure from Chicago, I closed the U. S. Trading house and delivered the keys to Isaac N. Van Voorhis, Surgeons Mate; the Books and papers belonging thereto accompanied me to Philad<sup>a</sup> from whence they shall be forwarded after they are properly closed.<sup>28</sup> After my departure from Chicago, Doctor Van Voorhis, shipped in the Sloop Friends Good Will, ninety nine packs furs, which were taken in at the Trading house on the public account, and which shortly after the fall of Mackinac, fell into the hands of the British at that place. An Invoice of those packs shall be forwarded from Philad<sup>a</sup>. I cannot close this, without taking the liberty to state, that, before my departure from Chicago, the Indians who had been accustomed to do business at the U. S. Trading House, appeared to be friendly disposed; these, on the approach of unfriendly parties from the Wabash and places near strength of the fort, however. Modern engineering skill has straightened the Chicago River giving it (before the reversal of its current through the construction of the drainage canal) a new exit to the lake. In 1812 the river turned sharply to the south a short distance from the lake, its mouth being opposite the present Madison Street. Fort Dearborn lying in this bend, was surrounded on three sides by the river. Captain Whistler in 1808 considered the fort "perfectly secure from any ambuscade or Barrier." William Johnston, who visited Fort Dearborn in 1809, considered it "the neatest and best wooden garrison in the United States." See Quaife, *Chicago and the Old Northwest*, 163-167, and William Johnston's Notes of a Tour from Fort Wayne to Chicago, 1809, manuscript in Chicago Historical Society library.

<sup>26</sup> For a sketch of La Lime's career see Quaife, *Chicago and the Old Northwest*, 148-150.

<sup>27</sup> The schooner *Mary*, James Rough master, was captured when the British took Mackinac, July 17, 1812. She was sent down the lakes as a cartel with prisoners and noncombatants; at Detroit she was stopped by General Hull, and again captured by the British when that place was taken. See Buffalo Historical Society, *Publications*, 8:294, 296, 306, 414.

<sup>28</sup> This promise was kept. Irwin's day book, petty ledger, order book, and other volumes pertaining to the operations of the Chicago factory are still preserved in the Indian office at Washington

the Mississippi,<sup>29</sup> sought protection from Cap. Heald who commanded that post, offering to encamp near the Fort for its greater protection, or to give information of the approach of unfriendly bands. This he actually refused and advised them not to come near the Fort.<sup>30</sup> In consequence we were without information of the state of that part of the country for some Weeks; till, by travellers, we learnt the Indians were assembling at different places — particularly at Peoria, on the Illinois, and St Joseph, on Lake Michigan. It was stated that these assemblages were of a pacific nature — to distinguish the friendly from the unfriendly Indians. How true this might have been, I am unable to say. This much I am certain, that, in the months of May and June, several Canadians from Malden were traversing the Indian Country, in various directions, particularly to the Prophets Village, on the Wabash, and to the Green Bay, on Lake Michigan; one of whom, in company with two Indian guides, was taken up at Fort Dearborn. In the examination, he underwent, he confessed he had been employed by the brother in law to the Indian agent at Malden for the purpose of seeing Robert Dickson at Green Bay, and believed the Guides (who, through the credulousness of the com<sup>g</sup> officer, fled in the night) had letters from the said agent to the said Dickson: and likewise believed that his and the guides mission of great importance, since they received very particular instructions and actually forced to undertake the expedition, though liberally compensated, and receiving from the Kings Store at Malden, broaches, ear-bobs, etc. to defray the expenses of their journey. This much is the result of this transaction, that the guides reached Green Bay, delivered letters from the said Indian Agent, to Dickson and the latter Assembled a body of Indians and conveyed them to the British Island St Joseph and shortly after headed them, and in conjunction with the British, made a descent on Mackinac and was considered a principal instrument toward the taking that place.<sup>31</sup>

<sup>29</sup> All accounts agree that the Indians in the immediate vicinity of Chicago were well disposed toward the whites, while those from a distance, particularly those from the Wabash, were hostile. In a letter of January 2, 1813, Thomas Forsyth, who came to Chicago the day after the massacre, congratulates Heald on his escape before the arrival of "them murdering dogs from the Wabash." Quaife, *Chicago and the Old Northwest*, 246. See also the story in Mrs. Kinzie's *Wau-Bun*, 181-185.

<sup>30</sup> Heald himself states that after the murders of April 6 he forbade the Indians' coming to the fort until he could find out to which tribe the murderers belonged. Letter to Captain William Wells, April 15, 1812, in Draper MSS., 26S47-49.

<sup>31</sup> The British emissary was Francis Keneaum. For an account of the mission of Keneaum and the two Indian runners see Quaife, *Chicago and the Old Northwest*, 213, 214; N. Edwards, *History of Illinois from 1778 to 1833, and Life and Times of Ninian Edwards* (Springfield, 1870), 324, 333; E. A. Cruikshank, "Robert Dickson, the Indian Trader," in *Wisconsin Historical Collections*, 12:139-142. Instead of the

Before I left Chicago, a letter, in answer to one of mine, was received from the Sec<sup>ry</sup> of War, requiring Cap. Heald to guard and fortify the public buildings. This was very satisfactory to me, because it enabled me to leave that place with somewhat less anxiety than I had been accustomed to feel: Thinking, as I did, that it would lead to a spirit of energy and additional security to the lives of individuals and to the public property under my charge. I cautioned the Cap<sup>n</sup> by letter, on more than one occasion, to beware of an individual (John Kinzie) that I had every reason to believe a british emissary, and who, I had been informed, had supplied the Prophet and his party with ammunition at different periods, and was known to have done the same thing during former Indian Wars. But, to my regret, I found this man had obtained so great an ascendency over the Captain as to render my efforts unavailing, and I also found they were connected in many improper concerns. The plots entered into by this man to destroy friendly Indians — the methods he had taken to inveigle the Officers (with the exception of the Surgeon's mate) into improper concerns — his bold and menacing conduct to the Citizens, if they dared to doubt his intentions — all tended to convince me that he felt an interest in bringing about an Indian War. Should he not have been instrumental in the fate of Chicago, I shall be much deceived, because if he fulfilled his part as emissary, he had it much in his power to preserve his own life by destroying the Witnesses to the murder of Lalime. This mans half brother (W<sup>m</sup> Forsyth) at Detroit, after the surrender of that place, was discovered to be a British emissary <sup>32</sup> and his brothers, (one of whom at Peoria on the Illinois), <sup>33</sup> were strongly suspected.

I have the honor to be, etc.

M. IRWIN  
U. S. Factor

GENL JOHN MASON

Sup<sup>t</sup> In. Trade Georgetown, Dis<sup>t</sup> Col<sup>a</sup>

runners' fleeing in the night, according to Edwards, they had put the letters intrusted to them in their moccasins and buried them in the ground: Upon being discharged from custody they proceeded on their way and delivered the letters to Dickson, who was passing the winter at the Fox-Wisconsin portage.

<sup>32</sup> John Askin, Jr., wrote in his journal describing the advance of the British to attack Detroit, August 16, 1812: "Mr. Wm. Forsyth was living near Mr. Henry's — I never saw a person more happy than he was to see us — he was so overjoyed that he could hardly speak." E. A. Cruikshank, *Documents Relating to the Invasion of Canada and the Surrender of Detroit, 1812* (Publications of the Canadian Archives, no. 7 — Ottawa, 1913), 241.

<sup>33</sup> This was Thomas Forsyth, half-brother and partner of John Kinzie. Probably the suspicion concerning his loyalty was unfounded. He performed important services for the Americans later in the war.

IRWIN TO MASON, October 27, 1812

[Department of the Interior, Indian Office]

GEORGE TOWN DIST COL<sup>A</sup>

27 Oct 1812

SIR

Perceiving by the newspapers that the Caledonia (lately in the service of the N. W. comp<sup>y</sup>) has been taken at Fort Erie <sup>34</sup> by a party of American mariners and carried to Black Rock and it being mention'd in the said papers that when taken she contained a quantity of furs belonging to the N. W. comp<sup>y</sup> I am in consequence induced to beleive that part of the said furs are from the chicago Trading House.

1<sup>st</sup> Because it was the caledonia that captured them on or about the 21<sup>st</sup> July last and landed them at Mackinac

2<sup>d</sup> Because the N. W. comp<sup>y</sup> never forward their furs from Mackinac to fort Erie.

3<sup>d</sup> Because the Caledonia was put in requisition by the British Gov<sup>t</sup> and would necessarily convey the property captured at or near Mackinac to Fort Erie.

The furs in question from chicago consisting cheifly of Muskrats and Racoons and comprising 99 packs were shipped [*MS. torn*] 11 July in the sloop Friends goo [*MS. torn*] Leigh master and amounted to 6.500 or 6.600 dollars the Invoice of which shall be forwarded from Philad<sup>a</sup> after my arrival there.<sup>35</sup>

I have the honour to be Y<sup>r</sup> most ob<sup>t</sup> Serv<sup>t</sup>

Signd M. IRWIN  
U S. factor

P. S the marks and numbers of the above said packs were U S N<sup>o</sup> 1a 99-  
C. F

GENL JOHN MASON

Sup<sup>t</sup> In : Trade

Original of the above sent to the navy sec<sup>y</sup> 27 Oct 1812

[Endorsed:] [*MS. torn*] Irwin

<sup>34</sup> The *Caledonia* was an armed brig, built at Amherstburg in 1807 by the provincial authorities of Canada. She was used to transport the British force from St. Joseph for the capture of Mackinac in July, 1812. After Hull's surrender of Detroit the following month the *Caledonia* together with the brig *Detroit* was captured by Lieutenant Jesse D. Elliott. Subsequently the *Caledonia*, under the command of Lieutenant Daniel Turner, was one of Commodore Perry's squadron. After the war the *Caledonia* was sold by the government to John Dickson, of Erie, Pennsylvania, and was renamed the *General Wayne*. Buffalo Historical Society, *Publications*, 8:295.

<sup>35</sup> The sloop referred to was the *Friend's Good Will*, built, owned, and commanded by Oliver Williams of Detroit, according to one authority, but according to another by Captain William Lee. The *Friend's Good Will* and the American sloop *Erie*,

CERTIFICATE OF PE-A-NISH, POTAWATOMI CHIEF<sup>36</sup>

[Department of the Interior, Pension Office]

I certify that when the firing commenced, the American troops were marching along the beach; that, when I first saw them, Capt. Heald, the commanding Officer, was in the midst of the men; that Capt. Helmes<sup>37</sup> was marching just in their rear; that, after they had ascended from the beach into the prairie, I was directed by the Chiefs to advance and speak to them; which I did; and was met by Capt Heald, who delivered his sword to me; that Capt Helmes spoke to Capt Heald and demanded whether they were to be massacred or convey'd to a place of safety; and when Capt. Heald answered that he did not know, Capt. Helmes replied that, if they surrendered, it must be by general consent. and, that if they were to be massacred, they would die like men, with arms in their hands; and I have no doubt that it was owing to the courage and firmness of Capt. Helmes that the savages were induced to agree to the terms of the capitulation, and save the lives of those who had survived the engagement.

LIEUTENANT HELM'S STATEMENT, March 6, 1826<sup>38</sup>

[Department of the Interior, Pension Office]

Commonwealth of Kentucky Logan County. Personally appeared before us Wm. Angell Marmaduke B. Morton two of the acting Justices of the peace for the County and State aforesaid Lina T. Helm who being duly sworn Deposeth and saith towit, That he was a Lieutenant in the United States Army in the year 1812 & belonged to the first Regiment of Inf. that he was in the battle at Chicago on the 15th of August 1812 under

Walter Norton master, were both captured by the British at Mackinac, one being in the harbor when the place was surprised and taken, the other arriving there from Chicago the following day and being decoyed into the harbor and captured through the ruse of displaying the American flag above the fort. There is conflict in the sources as to whether the latter vessel was the *Friend's Good Will* or the *Erie*; a possible explanation is that both these vessels made the trip to Chicago and were captured at Mackinac, under the circumstances just indicated, on their return voyage. The British renamed the *Friend's Good Will* the *Little Belt* and the vessel formed part of the squadron captured by Perry in the battle of Lake Erie.

It is not at all clear that the *Caledonia* "necessarily," or even probably, conveyed the Chicago furs to Fort Erie, as stated by Irwin. A letter of Captain Roberts from Mackinac, June 22, 1813, indicates that they were still there. This is borne out by a memorial of the South West Fur Company to Sir George Prevost, May 7, 1813. On the whole subject see *Michigan Pioneer and Historical Collections*, 8:233, 234; 15:281, 282, 320; Buffalo Historical Society, *Publications*, 8:296, 297, 304, 306, 312.

<sup>36</sup> From the pension papers of Lina T. Helm, Invalid file no. 24:616. The certificate, dated January 23, 1820, is authenticated by Alexander Wolcott, Indian agent at Chicago from 1819 until his death in 1830; Pe-a-nish signed it by making his mark.

<sup>37</sup> Helm was a second lieutenant at the time of the massacre. He attained the rank of captain in April, 1814.

<sup>38</sup> From the pension papers of Joseph Bowen, Invalid file no. 1:428.

the command of Capt. Nathan Heald and that he was well acquainted with Joseph Bowen a soldier of sd. company; that sd Bowen was in the battle of Chicago on the day above mentioned, & that he well recollects that sd. Bowen was wounded in the battle in the left arm above the elbow. the wound bled profusely & sd. Bowen requested him, the Deponent, to tie it up for him. He took his handkerchief out of his pocket and tied up his arm for him very tight and the bleeding ceased. This deponent has no recollection of any other wounds received by sd. Bowen, though he might have been as the firing continued some time after he tied up his arm. At the time of the surrender Doctor Vanvores and Ensign Ronan were both killed, the Capt. & myself wounded & all the men killed and wounded except about ten as well as my recollection serves me. Immediately after the fireing ceased Capt. Heald went to the Indians, gave up his sword & surrendered himself a prisoner. After which he came to me & advised me to surrender, that the Indians had promised to spare the lives of those that had survived the battle. to this I objected haveing no confidence in the Indians & told him we would prefer to die with arms in our hands, the more especially as I had been advised by an Indian <sup>89</sup> that was personally friendly to me not to surrender as we would all be massacred. This same Indian afterwards held a council with the Chiefs, & came & told me I might then surrender with safety, to my men & myself. Seeing no possible chance of escape, being entirely surrounded by the Indians, I referred the matter to the few remaining soldiers & it was agreed that we would surrender. This was at least two hours after Capt. Heald had surrendered. Capt. Heald was taken one side by the Indians & had not a chance to be amongst the men after the surrender. Nor did he make any enquiry about the wounded before he surrendered. this is the only way in which I can account for his haveing taken no notice of any of the wounded in his report of the action except himself and his wife. I was taken off by the Indians, & the men divided among the different bands. some ware massacred, some taken to Mackinaw. I have never seen Bowen since & haveing no descriptive list of the men I could not at this late date give a description of him. But that a Joseph Bowen was there & wounded I have the clearest recollection.

LINA T. HELM,

Late Capt. U S army

Subscribed & Sworn to before we two Justices of the peace for said State & County this 6 day of March 1826

Wm. ANGELL J P L C  
M. B MORTON J P L C

<sup>89</sup> Pe-a-nish, or Le Claire. See Helm's original narrative, Quaife, *Chicago and the Old Northwest*, 418, 419.